

Message Text

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44

ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-11 INR-11 LAB-06

NSAE-00 RSC-01 SIL-01 AID-20 EUR-25 NIC-01 HEW-08

SSO-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 L-03 NSC-07 PA-04 PRS-01

SP-03 SS-20 USIA-15 OPR-02 DRC-01 /165 W

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P 161055Z SEP 74

FM AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0000

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY MANILA PRIORITY

CINCPAC

S E C R E T VIENTIANE 7157

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: ELAB, LA

SUBJ: STRIKE AT OPERATION BROTHERHOOD (OB) HOSPITAL

1. LAO WORKERS AT VIENTIANE'S OPERATION BROTHERHOOD HOSPITAL (ALSO KNOWN AS SETTHATHIRATH HOSPITAL) WENT ON STRIKE DURING EARLY MORNING HOURS OF SEPTEMBER 16. THERE ARE APPROXIMATELY 300 LAO EMPLOYEES AT THE HOSPITAL. IT IS UNCLEAR HOW MANY EMPLOYEES ARE ACTUALLY IN THE STRIKING GROUP, BUT THE HOSPITAL IS SURROUNDED AND THE STRIKERS ARE NOT ALLOWING NON-STRIKERS INTO THE BUILDING. OB HOSPITAL IS SUPPORTED BY USAID FUNDS ADMINISTERED BY A CONTRACT WITH OBI, WITH A LARGE PART OF ITS TECHNICAL AND MANAGEMENT STAFF MADE UP OF FILIPINOS.

2. THE STRIKERS' DEMANDS INCLUDE:

- A) DISMISSAL OF SEVERAL OF THE SENIOR STAFF;
- B) EQUAL TREATMENT FOR ALL PATIENTS, LAO AND FOREIGN;
- C) TRAINING OF LAO TO TAKE OVER ALL FUNCTIONS IN THE HOSPITAL; AND

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- D) HIGHER WAGES AND IMPROVED FRINGE BENEFITS.

3. THE STRIKERS ALSO EXPRESSED SUPPORT FOR THE PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT OF NATIONAL UNION, THE VIENTIANE AGREEMENT AND PROTOCOL, THE JOINT NATIONAL POLITICAL COUNCIL 18-POINT PROGRAM AND PHOUMI'S 10-POINT STATEMENT OF LAST APRIL.

4. THE STUDENT'S ASSOCIATION APPEARS NOT TO BE INVOLVED IN THE STRIKE THUS FAR. IT DOES SEEM THAT THE LAO FEDERATION OF LABOR IS INVOLVED, ALTHOUGH WE DO NOT YET KNOW THE EXTENT OF THIS INVOLVEMENT. HOWEVER, ACCORDING TO DR. SOMBETH SENETHONG, THE HOSPITAL'S DIRECTOR WHOSE ADMINISTRATION IS CRITICIZED BY THE STRIKERS, THE PATHET LAO HAD A MAJOR ROLE IN INSPIRING THE HOSPITAL'S EMPLOYEES TO GO OUT ON STRIKE. HE PARTICULARLY ACCUSES A DR. KEO, A MEDICAL DOCTOR ASSIGNED TO MINISTRY OF HEALTH BY PL, OF WORKING ON LAO EMPLOYEES' GRIEVANCES AND AGITATING FOR STRIKE.

5. OFFICIALS OF THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH ARE MEETING TO FORMULATE THE NEGOTIATING POSITION, BUT, AS OF NOON ON SEPTEMBER 16, NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE STRIKERS HAD NOT YET BEGUN.

WHITEHOUSE

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